

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 08489 171435Z
ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4148
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, IS, XF
SUBJECT: EMBASSY COMMENTS ON WALLFISH STORY IN JERUSALEM POST
DECEMBER 16

REF: TEL AVIV 8438

1. MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL AVINERI TOLD THE AMBASSADOR
DECEMBER 16 HE WAS THE SOURCE ("A POLITICAL OBSERVER IN
JERUSALEM") FOR ASHER WALLFISH'S STORY IN THE JERUSALEM
POST THAT DAY WHICH CONTAINED WIDE-RANGING REMARKS ON
SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES. ON THE OTHER HAND, AN
AUSTRALIAN DIPLOMAT TOLD US THAT WALLFISH CLAIMED TO HIM THAT
RABIN HAD GIVEN HIM THE STORY, THE EXPLANATION MAY BE THAT AVINERI
TALKED TO WALLFISH ON BEHALF OF RABIN.

(THE PM'S OFFICE HAD EARLIER TOLD US THAT RABIN WAS NOT THE
SOURCE, BUT HAD ALERTED US TO A MAJOR PRESENTATION TO BE MADE
BY RABIN IN THE KNESSET DECEMBER 21, IN RESPONSE TO
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PAGE 02 TEL AV 08489 171435Z

A REQUEST BY THE KNESSET FOR A REVIEW OF FOREIGN POLICY).
OUR COMMENTS ON POINTS MADE IN THE WALLFISH
STORY (REFTEL) FOLLOW.

2. F-16: THE OBSERVER'S ADMONITION THAT ISRAEL MUST
NOT HAGGLE OVER MAKING F-16 COMPONENTS, LEST DELIVERY BE

DELAYED, APPEARS TO SERVE A POLITICAL PURPOSE FOR PRIME MINISTER RABIN IN HIS CONTEST WITH DEFENSE MINISTER PERES. (WE HAVE HEARD THAT WHEN PERES RAISED THE SUBJECT AT THE MOST RECENT CABINET MEETING, RABIN DISMISSED THE WHOLE MATTER BY SAYING THAT THERE IS NO REASON TO GET EXCITED BECAUSE THE US GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY COMMITTED ITSELF TO PROVIDING THE F-16). ISRAELI INTEREST IN MANUFACTURING F-16 COMPONENTS IS PROBABLY RELATED TO THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE KFIR PRODUCTION LINE WILL BE PHASED OUT WITHIN A FEW YEARS AND ISRAELIS WILL BE LOOKING FOR ALTERNATIVE USES FOR THIS EXPENSIVE PRODUCTIVE CAPABILITY.

3. PLO: THE OBSERVER SPEAKS IN CATEGORICAL TERMS ABOUT THE PLO: ISRAEL "MUST PERSIST IN REFUSING TO TALK TO THE PLO, AND NOT ENTERTAIN THE POSSIBILITY OF A THIRD STATE FOR THE PALESTINIANS." SINCE IT IS IMMEDIATELY PRECEDED BY (A) AN EXPRESSION OF SKEPTICISM THAT THE PLO WILL HAVE QUICK SUCCESS IN FORMING A GOVERNMENT-IN-EXILE, (B) AN IMPLIED JUDGMENT THAT THE PLO MAY ALTER ITS STANCE ON SC RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338, AND (C) A STATEMENT THAT THE ONLY OBSTACLE (TO NEGOTIATIONS) LOOMING AT PRESENT IS THE NATURE OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION, THIS CATEGORICAL ADVICE SUGGESTS A COMPLETE ISRAELI DISREGARD FOR RUMORS OF A POSSIBLE COMPROMISING ATTITUDE OF THE PLO.

4. 1977 NEGOTIATIONS: THE OBSERVVER SAYS THAT ISRAEL MUST BE READY FOR NEGOTIATIONS IN 1977, AND PURSUE THEM WITH TENACITY. THAT YEAR WILL BE FAVORABLE FOR NEGOTIATIONS, ONE REASON BEING THAT ISRAEL WILL HAVE UNPRECEDENTED MILITARY MIGHT. THESE STATEMENTS ARE RATHER UPBEAT FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 TEL AV 08489 171435Z

THE ISRAELI SCENE, AND APPEAR TO US TO BE THE BEGINNING OF AN ATTEMPT TO PREPARE PUBLIC OPINION FOR NEGOTIATIONS.

5. SOUTH LEBANON: ACCORDING TO THE OBSERVER, SYRIA, ISRAEL, AND THE LEBANESE CHRISTIAN LEADERS ARE ALL CONTENT TO LET THINGS RIDE IN SOUTH LEBANON. TERRORIST PRESENCE IN SOUTH LEBANON HAS BEEN GREATLY EXAGGERATED, AND THE AREA IS NOT BEING USED AS A BASE FOR OPERATIONS AGAINST ISRAEL. THESE REMARKS ON SOUTH LEBANON, FOLLOWING AS THEY DO A PERIOD OF MEDIA QUIESCENCE ON THE SUBJECT, SEEM DESIGNED TO CONVEY IMPRESSION THAT A TACIT AGREEMENT ON SOUTH LEBANON HAS BEEN REACHED BY ALL PARTIES CONCERNED.

TOON

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